Virginia Recreational Saltwater Development Fund
Evaluation of a Proposal for the Development of a Research or Data Collection Project

Project Number: 1207-13_M
Project Title: Data collection and analysis in support of single and multispecies stock assessments in Chesapeake Bay: the Chesapeake Bay Multispecies Monitoring and Assessment Program (ChesMMAP)

A. Problem Description and Resolution (20 points)

1. **Comment on the adequacy of the problem description, background information, knowledge of available literature/data sources, and anticipated benefits.**

   The proposal provides a good discussion of the role of stock assessments in the fisheries management process and identifies the data needs of single-species stock assessment models. The proposal relates these needs to the data that will be collected by the ChesMMAP survey. The proposal also discusses the growing interest in ecosystem-based management and how the survey can contribute to the needs of multi-species stock assessments.

   The proposal suggests that bay-specific stock assessments have not been performed for several exploited bay species (i.e., Atlantic croaker, summer flounder, spot, and weakfish) partly due to the lack of fisheries-independent data. Stock assessments are traditionally applied to the component designated as the management unit and/or to components that are considered genetically or otherwise unique from the larger population. The ChesMMAP survey will be more important in its contribution to existing stock assessments and management programs. One of the objectives listed in the proposal is to estimate population level parameters necessary to conduct single and multi-species stock assessments. How will parameters derived from this survey improve upon parameters currently used in stock assessments for those species?

2. **Describe your views on the conceptual approach to solve the problem.**

   The proposal suggests that one of the benefits will be the collection of relative abundance information for the adult/harvested components of select commercially, recreationally, and ecologically important species in the bay—information that the proposal claims is not provided by other monitoring programs operating in the bay. While the proposal does summarize the number of specimens collected, measured, and processed from the survey since 2002, it does not demonstrate whether larger/older individuals are being observed. A comparison of the size/age distributions of important species between the ChesMMAP and other bay surveys would have made for a much stronger proposal.

SCORE (Circle one)	Poor				Excellent
	0	5	10	(15)	20

B. Soundness of Project Design/Technical Approach (25 points)

1. Is there sufficient information to technically evaluate the proposal?

The proposal adequately describes the survey design, sampling methods, and procedures for processing biological samples.

2. What are the strengths/weaknesses of the project design (thoroughness, practicality, methods, integration with other work, etc.)?

One of the strengths of the design that is not highlighted in the proposal is how it will supplement data collected by other fishery-independent surveys along the coast, especially the NEFSC trawl survey. The NEFSC survey covers a wide spatial range and a number of stock assessments and management programs rely on the data collected by this survey. However, the NEFSC acquired a new research vessel, which can not sample in waters less than ten fathoms deep. The ChesMMAP survey can cover this gap, thus allowing continued collection of data that has become essential for assessment and management.

SCORE (Circle one)	Poor					Excellent
	0	5	10	15	(20)	25

C. Project Management and Experience/Qualifications of Personnel (15 points)

What is your opinion of the experience and capabilities of the Principal Investigator(s) to manage and conduct the work, the availability of facilities, and education and experience of assisting personnel?

The project leaders are qualified and capable of carrying out the proposed research. It appears that the necessary resources for performing the work will be available to the project team. No information on the education/experience of assisting personnel was provided.

SCORE (Circle one)	Poor			Excellent
	0	5	(10)	15

D. Project costs (15 points)

Is the budget realistic and reasonable? Indicate any unreasonable costs.

The proposed budget is outlined in moderate detail and does not appear excessive. The 2008 sampling year will be the seventh year for the ChesMMAP survey, if approved, and suggests the Principal Investigators are experienced in anticipating the funding needed for the proposed project.

SCORE (Circle one)	Poor			Excellent
	0	5	(10)	15

E. Value of the Project to Fisheries Managers (25 points)

Do you believe the results of this project will further management of the species described? Will the results be useful to managers?

The data collected from the ChesMMAP survey will benefit stock assessments and management by increasing our understanding of fish population trends and biological characteristics. The need for a yield-per-recruit analysis for summer flounder is not well demonstrated, as a yield-per-recruit is routinely performed with each assessment update. The proposal does not provide an indication as to when the anticipated data products (e.g., species life history profiles) will be completed and available.

SCORE (Circle one)　　　　　　　**Poor**　　　　　　　　　　　　**Excellent**

0　　　5　　　10　　　(15)　　20　　25

PLEASE ADD ANY FURTHER COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSALS BELOW: